



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

John J. Barthelmes, Commissioner

Division of Fire Safety

OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL

J. William Degnan, State Fire Marshal

NEWS RELEASE



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FIRE MARSHAL: CELEBRATE SAFELY THIS FOURTH OF JULY

CONCORD, N.H. - With the summer months and the 4th of July closely approaching, the New Hampshire Department of Safety - Office of the State Fire Marshal encourages everyone living in or visiting New Hampshire to "Celebrate Safely".

"In 2004, four adults and a child were burned in a permissible fireworks related incident in Gilford," said State Fire Marshal J. William Degnan. "The following year a home in Lee was destroyed by fire due to a teenager playing with fireworks and six people were burned in Tamworth in a permissible fireworks incident."

According to the National Fire Protection Association, on Independence Day in a typical year, more fires are reported across the country than any other day, and fireworks account for half of those fires. In 2004, fireworks caused an estimated 1,500 structure fires and 600 vehicle fires which resulted in an estimated 20 civilian injuries and \$21 million dollars in direct property damage. In 2005, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 10,800 people for fireworks related injuries. Nearly half the people injured by fireworks were under the age of 15.

"There is much that can be done to protect the public and the properties of New Hampshire from unnecessary injury or damage," Degnan said.

First, the safest way to celebrate the upcoming holiday is to attend public firework displays sponsored by your local community or civic organizations which have professional pyrotechnicians setting up and firing the fireworks. These displays are also inspected by public safety officials to ensure that the pyrotechnicians are setting up and firing the display in accordance with local, state, and national standards for safety.

Second, if you intend to celebrate with permissible fireworks (those legal consumer firework devices sold in New Hampshire licensed retail stores), check with your local fire department to ensure that the possession and display is permitted in your community. Set family boundaries, only adults 21 years of age or older are legally allowed to possess and display permissible fireworks. Supervision is paramount in keeping children safe; fireworks should not be readily available to tempt the curiosity of children, and should be stored in a secured location to prohibit their access.

Also, remember that summer weather conditions make grasses and other types of vegetation dry and vulnerable to fire. Celebrate safely and be aware of the forest fire weather conditions in your community.

(MORE)

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Degnan said celebrating safely also involves the three B's:

“Be Prepared” before lighting fireworks.

- Purchase only New Hampshire Permissible Fireworks, available at licensed retail stores throughout the state.
- Purchase **ONLY** the quantity that you will use.
- Permissible fireworks can **ONLY** be displayed on property that you own, or have written permission from the landowner.
- Have a water hose or fire extinguisher nearby in case of an unanticipated fire.
- Create a clear level surface to display your permissible fireworks away from things that can burn, or easily ignite.
- Call 911 immediately in the event of a fire or medical emergency, don't wait!

“Be Safe” when lighting fireworks.

- Adults 21 years of age or older shall be the only people possessing and displaying permissible fireworks.
- Always wear eye protection.
- Always follow the safety directions provided on each firework device or package.
- Light only one device at a time and move away quickly.
- Keep all spectators at a safe distance.
- Display fireworks only outdoors, away from anything that can burn, or easily ignite.
- Be considerate of your neighbors, family pets and the environment. You could be liable for damages to another's property.

“Be responsible” when finished.

- Clean up all debris when finished.
- Devices that do not fire once they are lit are very dangerous; if a firework device does not fire keep away for ten minutes or more, then ensure that it has been filled with water, or placed in a bucket of water.
- Always make sure that unused fireworks, matches and lighters are secured and out of the reach of children.

To learn more about a community fireworks display near you contact your local fire department for available dates and times.